

Remarks

Claims 11-13 have been amended. Claim 14 has been added.

The Examiner has rejected applicant's claims 2, 3, 5-7 and 11-13 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Fawcett, et al. (US 5,678,002) patent taken in view of the Phung, et al. reference (US Published Patent Application No. 2002/0007237). The Examiner has also rejected applicant's claim 4 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Fawcett, et al. patent in view of the Skaaning, et al. (US 6,535,865) patent. With respect to applicant's claims, as amended, the Examiner's rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicant's added independent claims 11-13 have been amended to better define applicant's invention. More particularly, applicant's independent claim 11 recites a trouble management system capable of communicating, through a network, with a customer apparatus connected to a product, or a service person's apparatus, comprising: first receiving means for receiving, from the customer apparatus, trouble information of the product; determining means for determining whether or not an inquiry is necessary, on the basis of the trouble information received by said receiving means; transmitting means for transmitting the inquiry item relating to the product to said customer apparatus, if said determining means determines that the inquiry is necessary; second receiving means for receiving, from said customer apparatus, a response which is input to said customer apparatus on the basis of the inquiry item transmitted by said transmitting means; and diagnosing means for diagnosing the product, in accordance with the response received by said second receiving means, when the determining means determines that the inquiry is necessary. Applicant's independent claims 12 and 13 define a method and a storing medium for storing a program having similar features and have been similarly amended.

The features of applicant's amended independent claims 11-13 are supported by FIGS. 2 and 3 and the description in applicant's specification as follows: first receiving means corresponds to steps S209 and S210 and the respective apparatus for carrying out these steps; determining means and transmitting means correspond respectively to steps S211 and S212 and the respective apparatus for carrying out these steps; second receiving means and diagnosing means correspond respectively to steps S213 and S214, S219 and the respective apparatus for carrying out these steps.

Independent claim 11 clearly recites that a trouble management system of the present invention is arranged to include a first receiving means for receiving trouble information of a product from a customer apparatus which is connected to the product. The system further determines whether or not an inquiry to the customer apparatus is necessary, on the basis of the trouble information of the product received from the customer apparatus, and if it is determined that the inquiry is necessary, transmits the inquiry item relating to the product to the customer apparatus to diagnose the product in accordance with a response to the transmitted inquiry item.

The above-described features of the present invention are not taught or suggested by the Fawcett, et al., Phung, et al. and Skaaning, et al. references. As the Examiner states in the Office Action, the Fawcett, et al reference does not disclose the determining means, the transmitting means and the second receiving means recited in applicant's claims. The Phung, et al. reference, on the other hand, merely discloses that a server communicates with a client (20) so that the client itself determines trouble in accordance with a trouble tree diagnosis. That is, this reference, as well as the Phung, et al. and Skaaning, et al. references fail to teach or suggest a trouble management system which receives trouble information from a customer apparatus to determine

whether or not an inquiry to the customer apparatus is necessary and, if it is determined that the inquiry is necessary, transmits the inquiry item to the customer apparatus.

In his regard, applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended to applicant's undersigned attorney in the telephone interview conducted with the Examiner on January 23, 2007. During the interview applicant's undersigned attorney stressed the above differences by pointing out to the Examiner that in both the Fawcett, et al. reference and the Phung, et al. reference, diagnostic procedures are being carried out at the local or customer level (in Fawcett, et al. via the customer server 40 and in Phung, et al. via the customer 20 and local server 208). In contrast, in the claimed invention, the first receiving means, the determining means, the transmitting means, the second receiving means, the diagnosing means, and their respective functions, are all being carried out in a trouble management diagnostic system which is not at the local or customer level. Instead, the trouble diagnostic system is connected, via a network, to a customer apparatus which is, in turn, connected to the product to be diagnosed.

This is made clear from applicant's amended claim 11 which recites a trouble management diagnostic system capable of communicating, through a network, with a customer apparatus connected to a product, or a service person's apparatus and which further recites first receiving means for receiving, from the customer apparatus, trouble information of the product; determining means for determining whether or not an inquiry is necessary, on the basis of the trouble information received by said receiving means; transmitting means for transmitting the inquiry item relating to the product to said customer apparatus, if said determining means determines that the inquiry is necessary; second receiving means for receiving, from said customer apparatus, a response which is input to said customer apparatus on the basis of the

inquiry item transmitted by said transmitting means; and diagnosing means for diagnosing the product, in accordance with the response received by said second receiving means, when the determining means determines that the inquiry is necessary.

Applicant's amended independent claims 11-13, and their respective dependent claims, all of which recite such features, thus patentably distinguish over the cited references.

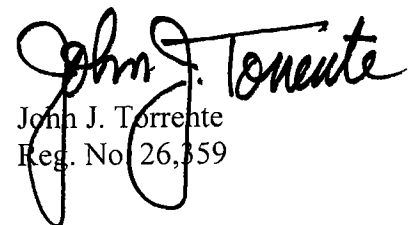
Finally, newly added dependent claim 14 recites that the apparatus of the present invention further includes diagnosis possibility determining means for determining whether or not a diagnosis is possible and additional determination means for determining whether or not a further inquiry is necessary, if the diagnosis possibility determining means determines that the diagnosis is not possible. These features of the present invention are supported by steps S214 and S215 shown in FIG.2. They also are not believed to be taught or suggested by the cited art of record

In view of the above, it is submitted that applicant's claims, as amended, patentably distinguish over the cited art of record. Accordingly, reconsideration of the claims is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,


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